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ABSTRACT

This paper states that school is an institution created by society to transmit the valuable life contents to be found in culture to children in the shape of learning contents. Discussed are (1) the ontological issues underlying curriculum; (2) the coherence between reality, culture and curriculum; and (3) man's cultural rights. Curriculum is viewed as a composite body of knowledge resulting from man's search for and discovery of the concrete reality of God's will (law) within creation. Cultural reality is the result of man's execution of his vocation as steward of nature. The curriculum includes knowledge about culturally formative activities that include a whole spectrum of reality. The way in which communities and nations throughout the ages have discovered the laws underlying reality and ordered these for an orderly existence is to be found within the culture. This is a concretization of "the right of peoples to preserve their culture." The homogeneity of cultural groups in the same school is a prerequisite for the orderly existence and functioning of any curriculum. On the basis of the foregoing information, it is, in the last analysis, essential to point to the futility of the adoption of curricula from countries with conflicting cultures. (RH)

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THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONE'S VIEW OF MAN, CULTURE AND CURRICULUM

SUMMARY

Education is transmitting the valuable life contents in a specific culture to the pupils in school. These contents are the result of the ways in which this culture views reality as a whole.

Through the school curriculum the pupils come into formal contact with the culturally formed reality. Through his different functions the pupil learn the valuable contents and use it by means of constructing a valuable future for himself, his culture and his nation.

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THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONE'S VIEW OF MAN, CULTURE AND CURRICULUM

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1. Introduction

School is an institution created by society to transmit the valuable life contents to be found in culture to children in the shape of learning contents. In the course of daily life, and particularly in one's entry into a profession and in the course of community service, learning contents are transmuted into life contents once again. In order to live effectively, in an orderly fashion and according to the demands of the era, scientific planning of the formal preparation to meet these needs is essential. Such planning involves the design of school curricula which, amongst others, have to keep account of the needs, demands and conditions of the cultural community.

In this paper the following will be discussed briefly: the ontological issues underlying curriculum; the coherence between reality, culture and curriculum; and man's cultural rights.

2. The ontological issues underlying the curriculum

The issue of reality or of ontology involves an investigation as to what exists, or what is (Taljaard, 1976, p. 28). There is a specific structure, building plan or natural law-determined character in the reality created and established by God (cf. also par. 3). In order to fulfil his vocation of stewardship of creation, man has, from the very beginning, had to look for and discover the concrete reality of God's will (law) within creation. This then had to lead to the discovery being given shape in becoming knowledge. In order to equip the child for this task it has been essential for man, ever since creation and up to the present day, to have access to a body of knowledge intended for this purpose. In the course of the histories of nations the entire body of knowledge which has had to be made accessible from various religious ground motifs, and then taught and learnt, can be discerned. "The curriculum is always, in every society, a reflection of what the people think, feel, believe and do" (Smith et al., 1957, p. 3).

This body of knowledge has to shape the pupil at school to the extent that he acquires at least a basic "equipment" in a variety of areas. It is then also only in the school (as the sole social, communal relationship) that this sort of

acquisition of knowledge is possible. The framework within which the composite whole of the body of knowledge has to be organized is the curriculum.

In the investigation of the curriculum documents in schools the following are to be found as the common denominators:

educative teaching objectives of the school and organized units of knowledge (subjects or themes). In subject curricula the specific objectives for the subjects as well as the learning contents of the subject may be found.

When these objectives and contents of various schools are analysed at the national and the international levels, a difference in religious and cultural perspectives emerges. What is regarded as valuable for life contents within one community by one culture might well be regarded as being less important by another.

In order to reduce the cohering fundamental traits of a curriculum from the point of view of man's interpretation of his cultural and creational vocation in the context of total reality, views on curriculum and curriculum documents, the following may be stated:

1. a composite body of knowledge;
2. plan for
   * formal
   * determined by aim
   * well-structured education
3. a being directed at and development from the needs and the demands of a cultural milieu (group or nations)

A definition which has been stated without further argumentation of curriculum, is:

A curriculum is the composite body of knowledge which has to be mastered by (a) learner(s) on the way to attainment of objectives previously set. This same definition is good for a subject curriculum,with the exception that this is a composite body of knowledge aimed at one well-delimited field.

3. Coherence between reality, culture and curriculum

From the religious, modal, individual and temporal structures of reality, only aspects of the modalities or ways of existence with the most significant meaning will be mentioned in the following (Schoeman, 1979, p. 36) chapters:

Creation (and thereby man as well) has been composed of at least fifteen modes which show a fundamental coherence and which show a line from the simplest modality (the numerical) to the most complex (the pistic). Each lower form is also determined by one of the higher ones. Esthetic matters therefore have to answer to the deepest meaning of art (beautiful harmony) in order to be recognised as art and are still under the guidance of the juridical, the ethical and finally the norms of religious faith.

The super-physical modes of existence of reality are the result of man's execution of his vocation of stewardship of nature. Through the development and shaping of nature to culture, such as the making of clothing from plant and animal fivres, man has had to keep account of the laws created into the natural world by the Creator. Clothes cannot be made out of water or a rock. Mondin (1979, p. 195) expresses the link between nature and culture in the following terms: "Nature is an original datum placed at the disposal of man, while culture is what man wrests from the original datum by his own initiative".

The curriculum includes knowledge about these culturally formative activities of the whole spectrum of reality. According to Steensma (n.d., p. 1) the task of the school is the following: "The instructional program of the school organizes the aspects of creation into areas of study called the academic disciplines". The child has to learn the cultural norms as presented in the various fields of knowledge, such as History, languages, Economics, Art and Religious Instruction. A piece of clothing answers in various cultural groups to various esthetic and ethical norms. These norms, in turn, are directed by the pistic or religious convictions of the parents and usually of the community as well.

In the parental home and in the school the child is brought up to live, within each sphere of existence, from the basis of fixed principles, values and convictions. Each of the modes according to which man, as part of the created reality lives, is directed by the highest mode, viz. belief in God himself or an idol.

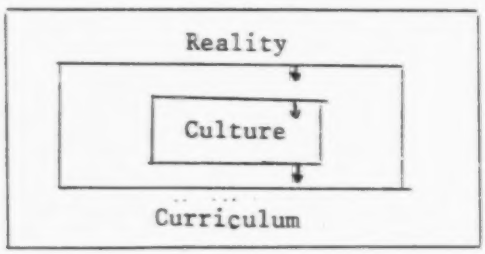
Each of the modalities of being, therefore, is religiously determined as well. Mondin (1979, p. 202) says that "Religion is a primary expression of every culture". In this she agrees with Tillich (quoted on p. 200) that "Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion".

From the foregoing it should follow that the curriculum as means in the act of education is religiously determined, because being culturally determined has been identified as a fundamental trait of curriculum (cf. par. 2). The curriculum expert has to devise a four-ways co-ordination in religious points of departure, viz. his own, that of the teacher, of the curriculum and of the pupils coming from different parental homes in the society.

Diagrammatically two crucial issues may be expressed in the following way:

Diagram 1

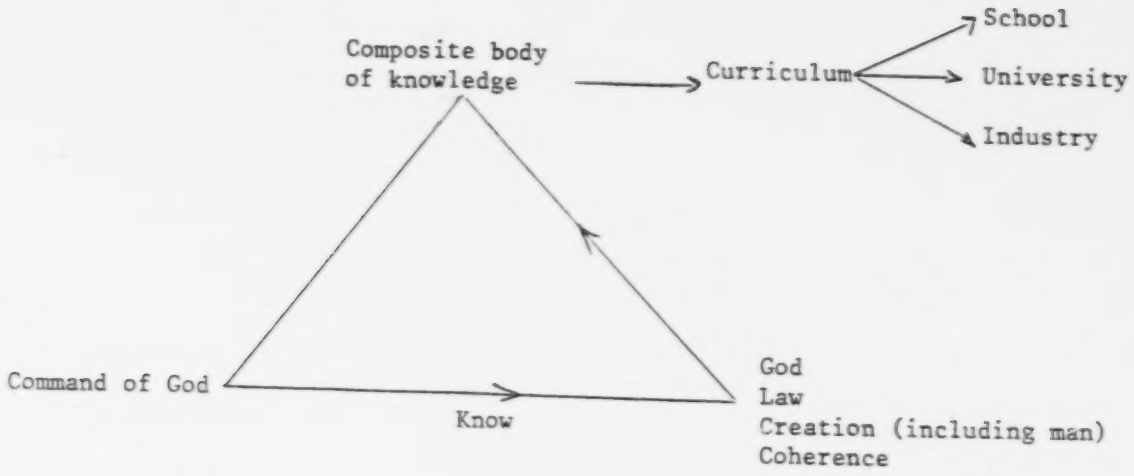
Reality, culture and curriculum



Culture is man's exploitation of the given and already formed reality and should, through the curriculum, be transmitted to the builders of culture of the future.

Diagram 2

The stewardship vocation of the curriculum



Man has the command to come to a composite body of knowledge through his ability to know (his analytical function). This body of knowledge includes God, law, creation and their mutual coherence. This composite body of knowledge is organized in the curriculum of the particular insitution and is directed according to specific objectives.

4. Man's cultural rights

Between the cultures of the primitive and modern Western man there is a phenomenal difference as regards development and scope. In the case of the latter the children have to be shaped through means of formal school education and through means of a cultural determined curriculum. Steensma (1977, p. 15) says in this respect that "It is the unique ordering of reality and culture that defines the school and its task, setting it apart from other institutions". The way in which a particular community controls reality results in valuable traditions and history, which the children have to learn in school. That enables them then to come to further development and extension of that which is culturally valuable. Existing life contents are thus transcended via the school to new life contents applicable to the child.

The way in which communities and nations throughout the ages have discovered the laws underlying reality and ordered these for an ordered existence is to be found within the culture. This is a concretization of "the right of peoples to preserve their culture" (Van Dyke, 1980, p. 1). Each generation takes its point of departure in the existing culture, therefore, and builds on that.

From the foregoing it is firmly fixed that the curriculum if founded in the historical mode of existence of reality and is qualified by the normative functions of man. The origin and the direction of a specific culture influence the educational and formative objectives which a nation sets for its educational system, and therefore for the normative choices which the child has to enact within the culture.

Apart from the reference to man as a historical being, one also has to think of man as a social being, and this fact has important implications within the cultural context. The curriculum has to make provision for the joint enactment of culture. Mostly this is referred to as the so-called extra-curricular activities in the school programme - without,however, didactically or fundamentally educational motivation.

The homogeneity of cultural groups in the same school is a prerequisite for the orderly existence and functioning of any curriculum. Just as the religious differentiation grows out of the ontological fact that people live from the point of view of different religious convictions, so cultural differences are also ontologically provable. Van Dyke (1980, p. 11) stresses this fact: "The assertion that a people has a right to preserve its culture may well mean that it has a right to preserve its religion". Through this cultural differentiation with reference to curricula is a logical consequence.

On the basis of the foregoing it is, in the last analysis, essential to point to the futility of the adoption of curricula from countries with conflicting cultures. Zentner (1979, p. 170) directs the attention to the conflicts which occur in the Third World countries as a result of continual adoption of curricula from western countries: "Whether these arrive in the guise of Historical Materialism, old-fasioned Christianity, modernized Capitalism or whatever". Apart from the fact that the right of community to preserve its own culture and to develop it is broken by this, confusion of identity is generated in the child on his way to development of his own maturity.

Formulation of curriculum must, however, make the development of knowledge from other cultures fertile for one's own development through the interpretation thereof from the viewpoint of one's own world and life-view. Then only will the interrelationship between view of man, culture and curriculum be realized in its fullest meaning.

5. Concluding remarks

The reality within which man lives every day is composed, on the basis of pre-scientific experience and scientific investigation, from a variety of modes or aspects. Man, as a part of this reality, possesses just such a variety of functions in the exploitation and the formation of this reality. On the basis of language, history, tradition and religion convictions this formative process assumes different shapes in various communities and in different nations. These forms constitute the valuable culture in which each man has a part, individually and as a group.

Each new generation therefore has to be led purposefully through nurturing teaching to the acquisition of knowledge of these cultural or life contents. In this way potential is developed in order to give firm shape to a nation's future.

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